

- ✓ Make the topic that you're talking about clear. Say 'I'm talking about..'
- ✓ Encourage the person to use different ways of "speaking" — such as pointing, gesturing, drawing simple pictures, or writing down some key words (if they are able to write). Using this suggestion is like giving someone a cane to help them walk.
- ✓ If you still can't understand, try asking questions which can be answered by "yes" or "no." Or ask questions with choices, such as "would you like coffee or tea?"
- ✓ If you still can't figure out what the person is saying, don't pretend that you understand. Instead, simply apologize for not understanding and tell the person that you can try again another time.
- ✗ Try not to shout. Aphasia does not affect a person's hearing.
- ✗ Don't be too picky. If you understood the person's message, don't worry if it wasn't perfectly spoken.

*One in a series of pamphlets about
Speech-Language after
Illness or Injury to the Brain*

*This series written by Justine Hamilton and Deidre Sperry, speech-language pathologists. Adapted with their permission for use by OSLA.
Revised 2011*

For additional information about Ontario's speech-language pathologists or audiologists, contact:

**Ontario Association of
Speech-Language Pathologists and
Audiologists (OSLA)**

Tel: 416-920-3676
Toll free: 1-800-718-OSLA(6752)

or visit www.osla.on.ca
 **OSLA**
 The Ontario Association
 of Speech-Language
 Pathologists and Audiologists

LEARNING ABOUT APHASIA

SPEAKING



OSLA
 The Ontario Association
 of Speech-Language
 Pathologists and Audiologists

LEARNING ABOUT APHASIA

SPEAKING

Some illnesses or injuries can cause damage to part of the brain. A stroke is an example of one of these injuries. A stroke happens when a blood vessel in the brain gets blocked or when it bursts.

A stroke or other brain injury can result in many different problems, depending on the part and amount of the brain that is damaged.

One effect on speech is called aphasia. The word 'aphasia' can mean many different things. Aphasia can affect a person's speaking, understanding, reading or writing, or any combination of these.

This pamphlet explains the effect on speaking.

- Some people have severe aphasia and can hardly speak a word. Other people have very mild aphasia and you may hardly notice that anything is wrong. But the person may tell you that they can't "remember" friends' names or that the exact word they're looking for won't come to mind. It's similar to always having the word "on the tip of your tongue."
- A word may come out wrong even though the person is thinking of the right word. Sometimes the word is close to the one they want — they may say "shoe" instead of "sock," or "chore" instead of "chair." Or the word is completely unrelated — they may say "foot" instead of "window," or say a made-up word, such as "kerchump" instead of "supper."
- People with aphasia know what they want to say, but their illness or injury has made it difficult for their brain to "translate" thoughts into words and sentences.

- Remember: The person has not lost their intelligence — **thinking** and **speaking** are two different things.

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

The best thing to do is to speak with the person who has aphasia and with their speech therapist. They will be able to give you specific ideas about how you can help.

Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when speaking with a person who has aphasia:

- ✓ Encourage the person to participate in conversations whenever possible, instead of withdrawing from them. The more welcome they feel, the more likely they are to try talking.
- ✓ Stay relaxed and allow the person enough time to speak. The aphasia will get worse if the person is rushed or excited.